THE MIRROR OF THE MONTHS

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

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THE MIRROR
OF THE MONTHS

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OF THE
MONTHS

BY
SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

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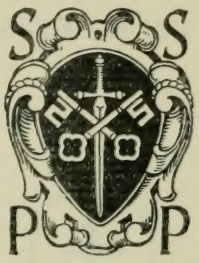

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January

Month of the Holy Infancy

THE year begins—on a January morning, cold and early. The earth lies frozen under her ſtrewings of snow. There is no wind, and a great silence broods over the fields; the faint bleating of a winter lamb only accentuates the ſtillness, as it creeps from the lambing-hut with its tale of life beginning in ſtruggle and diſtress. It is the only sound of life in all that froſt-bound ſtillness, and it is a sound of woe.

No promise shows in all that hard, dark soil. Surely nothing can live on the frozen grass, or in the waters of the pond that lie black under their scum of ice. The sun himself looks feeble as he tries in vain to disperse the January clouds, and the long beam that at laſt goes down into the woods contains no warmth and only the paleſt light. The fields are bound—water-logged ditches, half-frozen soil, hedges of bare, spindled thorn. The fields are silent—birdless, windless, lifeless; they have no voice but the cry of the winter lamb.

* * * *

It is a week now since "when all things were in a quiet silence and that night in the midſt of her swift course" the Eternal Word leaped from the throne of

the heavens to the throne of ſtraw. For a week he has shared the bed and shelter of the ox. Unable to do more than feed and cry, he has lain in Mary's arms and cried for her breaſt. Out into the ſtar-pricked winter darkness creeps the wailing of the speechless Word. He is the Word—he cannot speak. He is the Energy that set the worlds in motion—he lies helpless on his mother's lap.

But now a new note has come into his cry of hunger and helplessness—the note of pain. He who is the End of the Law submits to the means he has ordained for approaching himself. He who is the Light of the World enters the thick darkness where Moses found God. He will make Sinai a foothill to Calvary. . . . "Verily I say unto you, I am not come to deſtroy but to fulfil"—perhaps to deſtroy by fulfilling, as an ancient bottle is burſt with new-made wine. The veil of the temple is rent in twain at the cry of 'Conſummatum eſt,' and in that hour the Law of Moses ſtands both deſtroyed and fulfilled.

So the child in Mary's arms is really a mighty, propitiatory child. The Precious Blood did not fall only on Calvary but at Bethlehem. It was there that the fountain was firſt opened for sin and uncleanness, in the firſt dark hours of the year. As the winter sun shall mount at laſt into the blazing heavens of July, so he too will pass through shattering equinoxes of redemption to his ascended summer calm.

But our New Year's worship is for him in his

winter helplessness, his smallness, his obedience to the frosty fierceness of the law. He is the pattern of our Faith—its helplessness in its first struggle for life—for what are its two thousand years in his sight but as yesterday?—its smallness, as it lies in the stable of humble intellects and impulsive hearts—its half-conscious obedience to laws which are the patterns of heavenly things—its blood-shedding in that obedience. . . . We are often too confident of our Faith, just as our enemies are too contemptuous of it—we and they forget that it is still only a child, existing chiefly by desire, by feeling, by necessity.

The age of that child made obedient unto the law, and in the shedding of blood first given his human name, is not more disproportionate to the age of the Law than is the age of the Kingdom of Heaven to the age of the earth. Millions and millions of years ago life first appeared—a small helpless thing, scarcely distinguishable from the inorganic mass, in constant danger of being stamped out by the mighty forces around it. Throughout long ages it developed so slowly that its growth would be almost imperceptible to the watchman of a thousand years . . . and as it grew, it submitted itself to the Law. Terrific forces bound it, moulded it, complicated it, regulated it, evolved it. We see the domain of the Law stretching back from the circumcised Christ, far beyond the Priestly Code, far beyond the days of Moses on the Mount, back to the prehistoric ages of the world, when in some dim secret place of the sea

there was a change, a miraculous birth. In the same way we see the dominion of Grace stretching forward from the child of that winter's day, beyond his helpless infancy and suffering manhood, beyond his Cross, beyond his empty grave, beyond the Mount of his Ascension, on into the far future of the world, when having grown to manhood and shared his Cross, it is raised at last to share his throne.

On the Feast of the Circumcision the old and the new kingdoms meet—the kingdom of Nature and the kingdom of Supernature, the kingdom of the Law and the kingdom of Grace. We do not understand why the greater submits to the less, why Grace is content to suffer under the Law, why the New King weeps and the Old King carries the sword.

"I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." . . . Not only the Law of Moses, but the whole Old Testament of the world's history—that which we call, understanding but in part, the Law of Nature. The supernatural life does not come to destroy the natural, but to fulfil it, not to supplant but to complete it. Grace fulfils the Law, and Spirit raises Matter to the right hand of God. On the Feast of the Circumcision the sacramental wonder has begun.

So we watch the New Life lying on the Winter's lap, submitting itself humbly and sweetly to nature and mankind, surrounded by dangers that threaten it—the shouts of Herod's soldiers are not far off—suffering the pains and indignities that accompany its surrender to our limitations, baptising itself into

our humanity with blood. Mary and Joseph—the loving and the wise among us—know that it will live best in the warm air of simplicity, homeliness and familiarity, of childhood and the hearth. It must be sheltered from the windy blasts of dispute, and wrapped from the frosts of prohibitions; it must not be brought into the cold halls of pomposity, nor starved by cutting off from the six days of common things. . . . Mary and Joseph must be careful guardians of the New Life if it is to grow through the slow ages of the world's future—as life grew humble and close to the ground through the ages of her past—till it is old enough to claim its manhood —till it attains at last to the full stature of the Cross.

February

Month of Light in Darkness

IT is still very calm—but the frost is over. The hardness is gone from the air, and the cold, and that chill sense of binding. Instead, there is a feeling of moisture, which is also a feeling of growth—of the first growth. Already that growth has become apparent in the delicate catkins that hang from the hedges, in the frail budding of the trees. As yet there is no green, only a brown stickiness—no unfurling, only a close-packed promise. But life and growth are there, in the hedges, in the woods, and in the moist, rain-drenched earth, whose scents are carried up the lane by the breeze which has the first spring warmth in it. A slow light spreads over the fields at evening—yellow, rainy, reflected in the ponds and in the watery ruts. It is a faint light, a watery light, but it shines where a month ago was darkness.

* * * *

Once, long ages ago, there was only twilight in the world—not a twilight of the sun, though those were days of ice and snow and a strange desolation, but a twilight in the soul and mind of man, dimness and faintness and pale struggle in the spirit and mind

and intellect—a world in which the earliest man saw men only as trees walking.

The last great ice age was approaching, and where once the forest had grown thickly, the trees were becoming scant. The forest-belt receded before the advancing world of ice, which came out of those parts which are now Scandinavia, and its place was taken gradually by barren tundras or steppes. In the forest had dwelt a strange race, common stock of ourselves and the apes. These beings had lived in the trees, an arboreal life, far above the ground, more or less secure from the terrible beasts that stalked those parts of the world. When in a slow process of many hundreds of years the tree-belt receded, a large proportion of the tree-dwelling race went with it into the south, maintaining by migration the ease and safety of their old conditions. These migrants were the ancestors of the African monkey, born in the freedom and comparative security of the jungle, faithful to the old conditions and the old environment, to which they became more and more perfectly adapted in succeeding generations.

But what of those who remained behind? From tree-dwellers they had become earth-dwellers. They must painfully adapt themselves to an entirely new environment, and learn new ways of feeding, moving, living, at bitter cost to the individual and to the race. They were no longer safe from marauding beasts, the giant mammoths and buffaloes and elks

that preyed over the steppes. It would seem as if they had made an evil choice, and would have been wiser had they done as others of their race and clung to their old conditions, following the tree-belt southward. Nothing but destruction could come of this defiance of their environment, this painful adoption of new ways. Those who remained after the trees were gone must surely perish.

But this first race of men (that yet were not quite men) had not acted entirely without light. Descending from the trees to the ground, their hands and arms, used hitherto for climbing, were now set free for enterprise. At last man stood upright. The ages went by, and his hands, no longer needed for mere balance and locomotion, learned skill. He picked up objects, used them, shaped them, and with using the power and scope of using grew. At the same time, the dangers with which he was beset sharpened his brain into resource and constructive planning. His reason came to have a definite survival value in the scheme of things. At first it had been by strength alone that living things survived. Those were the days when the ichthyosaurus and the giant iguanodon roamed the earth. Then the survival factor changed, and the battle was to the swift—instead of the ichthyosaurus and the iguanodon flourished the reindeer and the hare. But now at last mind became dominant, and mankind triumphed by virtue of his better brain development, both over the swift and over the strong. His brain taught him stratagem to

atone for his lack of swiftness, it gave him skill to make weapons so that his weakness was a match for the strength of his enemies.

But it taught him more than this. The light was growing, and one day a man drew a rough picture of a buffalo on the roof of the cave where he lived. He did not draw it in the spirit of imitation but in the spirit of power. By placing the image of the creature there in his cave he felt himself to have won power over it. Mere magic-making, no doubt . . . nevertheless by such an act man definitely asserted the power of mind over matter, of the unseen over the seen. The first upward step was taken. The Præparatio Evangelica had begun.

The long process had started which was to end in the "ethical monotheism" of Judea. From mere magic-making man passes on to the idea of propitiation. He adopts a personal relation towards the Unseen. Propitiation leads him to the idea of beneficence—his gifts are accepted, calamities and dangers are averted, therefore the Unseen, though cruel, powerful, and capricious must also know moments of loving-kindness. In time his gods are half good and half bad, but it is remarkable that continual contact with the Unseen through the ages both before and after history, slowly deepens man's sense of its fundamental goodness. At last even his idea of goodness itself changes and acquires an ethical significance. Isaiah and Jeremiah lift up their voices—Wisdom and the Son of Sirach speak—and the

spiritual environment is ready for the coming of the New Life, of the Virgin Mary, as in the ages of the ages ago the physical environment was ready for the birth of life in the virgin sea.

It was the suffering and struggle of man which made him first look upwards, and in the whole history of the world it would seem as if no step, either material or spiritual, was ever taken without pain. "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin." Perfect adaptation to environment—or, quite plainly, happiness—means the end of progress. If man is to go forward, he must be in a state of warfare and dissatisfaction with his environment—in other words, he must suffer. It would seem as if suffering were an indispensable condition of advance. The corn of wheat that falls into the ground cannot bear fruit except it die, and when that process takes place in consciousness, then it is suffering, no matter what its fruit.

You may speculate whether suffering would or would not have been a condition of progress if there had been no Fall. The first impulse is to answer unhesitatingly that it would not—suffering has a place only in a world whose processes are warped by evil, it can have no place in the scheme of an all-loving and all-powerful God. But, after a little reflection, you realise that, though suffering as we know it could certainly have had no place in a sinless world, nevertheless some process of which our suffering is a perverted image may have been a condition of

advance. The free creature gladly doing battle with its environment in order to fulfil with a pure and loving will the intelligible purposes of God is of a different order from the creature bound by sin, who endures ignorantly and unwillingly its conditions of progress, which indeed has the power to abuse them into conditions of failure, so that pain no longer brings its certain redemption. Directly suffering becomes voluntary and intelligent it is no longer suffering at all. The misery lies in the clouded mind and will, and it is for this clouding that sin is responsible. No one of us has ever suffered entirely of clear purpose or free will, so it is impossible for us to know the place of suffering in the Purpose of God.

But to the stumbling pain of our first ancestors we owe the fact that we stand upright upon our feet, to the first glimmerings of logos-light that bade them stay and fight a new environment rather than follow their old one into happiness we owe, humanly speaking, the fact that we are men. The light shined in darkness, and the darkness overpowered it not. The pale February dusk is a-flower with the promise of Spring.

March

Month of the Passion

THE softness has gone from the air, which no longer smells of earth. Indeed some of the sharpness of January is back again; but it is back no more as a binding force—rather as a breath, a movement, a release. The gale sweeps the sky along with it over the fields—the clouds race their shadows over the young grass, and over the last barrenness of the winter ploughings. The spring ploughs are now at work, tearing up the earth's back, and already the first flowers are a-bloom, while the willow-catkins in the hedge have reached a yellow ripeness. They are like splashes of sunshine in the hedge, beside the white moony patches of the first wild cherry. In spite of the Lenten austerity and cold of the earth and air, there is throughout the country-side a sense of released warmth; the flying, tattered blue of the sky has lost its winter paleness, the sunshine already has a spring heat in it, the shadows have in them a depth of passional violet—they are no longer cold and grey and dead, but living, like the sun.

* * * *

This is the month of the Spring Equinox, when great things happen in the heavens, when in the ancient world worshippers were conscious of some

terrific event in the lives of the gods. It was the month when the sun's brightness triumphed over the winter, when the curse of the sterile earth was removed, and life and birth and joy and fruitfulness came back into the fields. The old astrologer-astronomers read the doings of more than the material heavens in the slow Procession of the Equinoxes. When Taurus was the dominant sign, then it was the bull-headed God who triumphed over his enemies—Marduk, the bull of heaven, vanquished Tiamtu, the dragon of the great deep, and in Assyria winged bulls were among the gods, with mild human faces. Then, when after five hundred years the sign changed, and Aries was ruler of the Spring Equinox, came the reign of the ram-headed gods, of Jupiter Ammon and the gods of Egypt. The Spring saviour became a ram—a lamb . . . "the sign of the Son of Man shall be in the heavens." . . .

But in none of these early conceptions of a triumphant god overthrowing the powers of darkness was the victory won without blood. Tammuz, Adonis, Baldur, Osiris, Orpheus—all were slain—all bowed whether finally or temporarily, to the powers of the underworld and of darkness. Till at last pagan religion reached its height, its final climax in preparation for the Gospel—in the idea of the victim whose death brought life into the world.

It was not only in Judea that the conception of the Suffering Servant prepared men's minds for the coming of Christ. Long before the time of Christ

men had begun to rationalise the processes of suffering. They no longer fought the cruelties of their environment—the evil and pain of life—as beasts or as children. Both will and understanding were striving to take their share in the conflict. Philosophers built up systems on the idea of pain; and the popular religions dealt with it symbolically in their sacrificial rites; the mystery religions made it the centre of their arcana.

All looked forward, however dimly, to a deliverance from suffering. The Stoics sought to overcome it through enduring it, the epicureans through ignoring it; the popular religions fell back on the idea of propitiation—on the conciliation of an anthropomorphic god who might be appeased into sparing; the mystery religions saw as in a glass darkly the God himself becoming the deliverer from the evils of the human process in which he too had a share.

Then the New Birth took place, and suffering was redeemed together with all other human processes. The Incarnation means the taking up into the godhead of the complete manhood, a manhood of which suffering is an inevitable condition. By taking our flesh, Christ redeemed the entire process of the world, which sin had made blind and futile. He gave the world's sorrows a place in the kingdom of heaven—grief, pain, struggle and death were given their place in the eternal mind of God. The fumbling processes of nature became supernatural—they were born again.

Natural suffering, whether in man or beast, may be compared to the sacrifices of the old dispensation —"which could never make the comers thereunto perfect." The Law stands for nature unredeemed as Grace stands for nature redeemed and becomes the Kingdom of God. Instead of the old sacrifices in which the unwilling and unknowing victim was offered by forces outside itself, to which at best it could only submit in the spirit of fear and meekness, came the new sacrifice of the Victim who is also the Priest, who of free will, full knowledge and true love offers up himself, a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

The only deliverance from suffering is through sacrifice—through offering. Once a man accepts pain no longer in the spirit of rebellion or of blind endurance, or even of mere negative resignation, but in the spirit of co-operation, he is free. He becomes as it were the collaborator of God in the processes of the world—his will and understanding are restored to their pre-Adamic integrity.

One of the graces of Calvary is this grace of offering. As perfect man, Christ offered all human suffering to God, with a perfect will and a perfect understanding, so that now by virtue of the Cross, mankind too becomes priest as well as victim. He too can offer what he endures—whether the endurance be sought, as in the case of the saints and ascetics, or merely suffered in the inevitable common way of life. On Calvary, suffering was redeemed from the

bondage of the law, of nature and the old Covenant, and was made a part of the supernatural order, a thing of grace. It is the old symbolical antithesis between the Esau and Jacob, Sinai and Jerusalem, Adam and Christ—the Evangelical message of the changed heart—the mystical doctrine of the New Birth. Suffering has its place in the New Covenant in the Kingdom of God, and as it was before a law of natural development, becomes now a law of spiritual growth. The unwilling victim of blind and cruel processes is now the priest of an all-wise, all-loving God, offering pain and grief in union with Calvary in one tremendous sacrifice—till at last sorrow becomes the world's eucharist, its sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

April

Month of the Resurrection

THE flowers are closed in the moonlight of the April garden, but their perfumes fill the night—hyacinths, tulips, and ghostly white and yellow lilies scent the air with a dim, delicious fragrance. They sleep in the fullness of Spring, and the April moon, round and white, displays the masses of their colours in her dazzling beam.

Faint scents of earth come from the field, of the earth harrowed and her hidden secrets revealed. The scent of moss and soil mingles with the scent of the flowers in the garden. The moon rides high, then dips towards the west—she founders in the west like a great ship; the moon founders, and as she sinks, the sun arises on the opposite shore of the sky, and a long golden beam slants into the garden. The flowers wake and open their petals to the sun—the scents of the harrowed earth are lost in the sweetness of the opening flowers.

* * * *

"The night is come—O night verily blessed!"

The blessed night is an April night, the night of a full moon. Already the scents of Spring are stirring in the fields—fair scents, fugitive scents, scents of

budding and growth. Yet to the watcher of the Passion, Spring has not yet fully come. The earth is like a stage set, but with the curtains down. All is in readiness, but the drama has not yet begun. The watcher of the Passion feels that Spring will not have begun till he sings among the perfumes of incense and lilies:—

"Lo, the fair beauty of earth, from the death of winter arising,
Every good gift of the year now with its Master returns."

But already at those lines he will be looking back —back on a beginning he did not see. The breaking of Easter day was hidden from all but the moon, as none but the moon saw the Son of Man rise from the dead. So on this most blessed night there is no watching but the watching of the moon. The faithful have kept a sorrowful watch in Gethsemane, as a few months ago they kept a joyful watch at Bethlehem, but this night is too blessed, too solemn for human vigil. All we can do is to salute it as it drops over the earth, to greet it as we should greet a joyful daybreak—

"The night is come—O night verily blessed!"

Then we disperse and leave that night to its own mysteries.

The moon is high in the sky, her flooding whiteness of light has wiped out nearly all the stars. On the earth she calls colours into being, strange, ghostly colours. She sails across the heavens like a

ship, and to-night she seems to bear with her the wonder of all past lore: she is the ship of the dead to which the Egyptians looked up, she is the goddess who wooed Endymion, she is the Mystery of Mysteries in some far-off Hindu temple. Ship, queen and goddess, mystery of mysteries, she is by virtue of that night when she rode the Paschal heavens and saw what was hidden from all human eyes.

That night was nearing its close, and already the scents of morning were in the air. The flowers and the shrubs in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea breathed into the spring moonlight perfumes like the Song of Solomon. In the clear light of the Paschal moon, that great moon of the feast, their colours were flung into the flooding whiteness, the crimson of the lilies, the flame of the flowering thorn. The garden breathed the breath of spring and the breath of morning, as the moon dipped slowly towards the rim of the earth. She was like the great white lamp of fire that Enoch saw burning in the kingdom of the Son of Man. Already with her whiteness another whiteness was mingling, the whiteness of dawn spreading over the vault of the sky. She lay upon the rim of the earth and her beams flowed straight as a river through the trees of Joseph of Arimathea's garden. Then the Wonder happened. In the whiteness of her beams stood a Man—very still in Joseph of Arimathea's garden. He seemed part of the peace and tranquility of the

night, and yet in his stillness flowed the festival flood of Spring—budding, joy, warmth, light and life.

For a moment the moon's rays held him, then a strange kindling flush crept into them, as they mingled with other rays—they warmed, they reddened . . . and the sun came over the edge of the world and looked into the face of the moon. Between them stood the Risen Lord of both—and across the world the sun and moon gave each other the first Easter Salutation—

> "The Peace of the Lord be always with you!"
> "And with thy spirit!"

So even to this time that night is watched by the moon, and we, like the disciples, do not see the Son of Man arise, but know him afterwards in the breaking of bread. In the liturgy of the Mass itself, we do not see the fraction of the Host into the chalice which shows his rising, though our attention is ceremonially called to the solemn moment when the Altar becomes both Bethlehem and Calvary. We know when he takes upon himself the veils of our humiliation, we know when his sacrifice stands lifted to the Father, but of the moment when the Altar is Joseph of Arimathea's garden, when the broken body and the poured out blood attain the re-union which is their resurrection, we know nothing till we hear the Easter greeting—"The peace of the Lord be always with you." It is the priest alone who looks over the Altar as on that first night the moon alone

looked over the Altar of the world and saw the Sun of Righteousness arise.

* * * *

"A festival of the returning Spring"—"the god dies to symbolise the apparent death of Nature in Winter, then rises again at the Spring Equinox." "Tammuz — Gilgamesh — Orpheus — Osiris — Jesus." Thus the student of comparative religion flings the solemnities of our redemption into the same heap as the nature cults of heathendom. We are inclined to resent this treatment, to deny its justice—but can we? Do we really need to? Why should we be ashamed that in some far back time our father Hammurabi, or our father Tutankhamen, as well as our father Abraham, rejoiced to see our day, and he saw it and was glad?

The devout pagan, whether of the valley of the Euphrates or of the Nile, was wiser than many a learned man to-day who sees in the story of the suffering and triumphant God no more than the story of the withering and flowering field. Those pious heathen of old looked out on the rice fields drowned in the winter floods, they saw the floods recede and a cleansed and refertilised earth emerge from the waters, but their eyes were not so dim as to see only an earthly tragedy and its overthrow—they saw their god suffering in the drowned field, victorious in its resurrection. They could not see the woes of earth apart from the woes of heaven,

and as their allegory of food and drink purged itself through the ages into an allegory of sin and redemption, so that under countless rites countless redeemers pointed to the Redeemer of all, that great shape of human thought was made which should be the chalice waiting to receive the wine of divine revelation.

For the great truths of our faith were born in the same manner as all the other wonderful births of earth, all those miraculous virgin births which find their historical ground in the Incarnation . . . "by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary"—earth prepared by the Divine Spirit to receive the New Life of heaven. As Christ redeemed human nature, so Christianity redeemed human thought. As for untold thousands of years the physical processes of the earth were preparing him a body for his love, so for thousands of years the mental processes of the human race were preparing him a body for his truth. We have grown accustomed to the idea that Christianity baptised into itself the best of Judaism, but we have yet to accept the undoubted fact that it also baptised into itself the best of paganism. We are like the pious Christianised Jew of the first century who could not understand that the Gospel was also for the Greek. We talk as in reproach of the "Muddy waters of Mithras," not thinking that by virtue of Cana even these waters can be made wine. . . . When St. John saw the heavenly Jerusalem he said that "all the kings of the earth shall bring their

glory into it," and among those kings ride Mithras, Tammuz, Osiris, Orpheus, Dionysius . . . riding to Joseph of Arimathea's garden, to lay their glory at the Empty Tomb.

May

Month of Mary

AT last the Spring has moved further than beauty. She has about her some of the richness of Summer. The earth has lost the faintly wistful air that she wore in March and April, the air of expectancy, as of one waiting the fulfilment of a promise. That promise is already realised—in the rich leaves that have clothed the trees, removing that earlier suggestion of austerity in their outline—in the first springing corn—in the first hard, small apples that appear in the orchards while the fallen blossom is still on the ground—in the shagginess of the hedges and the warm heaviness of the air, where scents are no longer fugitive, but lie thick and drowsy. The air too is full of wings—the wings of birds and insects, alert with their spring business; it is full of sounds as well as of movements and of scents—hummings and dronings and buzzings and trillings, the utterance of innumerable small voices. The air teems, the earth teems, though as yet Summer has not come, and over the hedges and fields lies the virginal white of the hawthorn and daisies. Mingled with the richness of Summer is still the white beauty of Spring, the expectancy of Spring, the freshness and coolness of Spring.

* * * *

For many years the religions of the world had dreamed of a woman born of the foam of the sea. To the Greeks, Aphrodite had walked delicately over the waves, to the Hindu, Maya was born of the churning of the ocean. The dream was one of beauty and illusion—of beauty which in the throes of man's imagination became lust and illusion which became peril. The religions of the world dreamed too of a woman who symbolised the teeming earth, the earth which brings forth her children rejoices in them, loses them, seeks them and finds them again. Proserpine, Ceres, Isis, all stand as images of the fruitful earth in her joys and distresses. It has been made a reproach of Christianity that she has collected and preserved these dreams in the figure of Mary, Virgin and Mother. Mary, we are told has incorporated in her story the legends of Aphrodite, Maya, Ceres and Isis. Her very name is the name of the bitter, salt-tasting sea—her sorrows for her son untimely slain are the sorrows of Ceres who sought her daughter at the throne of Pluto, and of Isis who sought her son in the floods of the Underworld. They are all, first, in a dim legend, the sea whence life mysteriously came, and then in later myth the earth-mother living through the adventure of seed-time and harvest, Spring, Summer and Winter. Mary is the inheritor of them all, both earth and sea—the toiling mother of the year, and the far-off, virgin source of life.

Christianity would not be what it professes, the religion of the world and perfect harvest of the Golden Bough, if it did not fulfil the religious dreams of mankind, the myths, legends and allegories of a world growing slowly lighter. Since our Lord is the embodiment of the world's dreams of a triumphant sun-god, slain, buried, and mightily risen, so our Lady is the embodiment of the world's dreams of a woman wonderful in her child-bearing and herself wonderfully born. The two strains of sea-daughter and earth-mother meet in her. Her beauty is the beauty of Aphrodite before men's hearts corrupted it, of the virginal, white sea-foam —her fertility is the fertility of Proserpine, lady of the harvest, her sorrows are the sorrows of Ceres, that far-off Mater Dolorosa who suffered in her child.

She is the meeting-place of Spring and Summer, both Virgin and Mother. She stands before us as the Maiden, sweet, youthful and lovely—all the purity of the world is in her mouth and in her eyes. Yet her virginity is not sterile—she is not only virgin but mother. She is the palace of life—on her arm is throned the New Life come in the eternal child.

As Virgin and Mother, Mary fulfils the world's dreams of womanhood—dreams more tarnished and groping than any, perhaps, since the world was astray in strange paths of thought as it sought to realise a perfect woman. For the world had con-

ceived its ideal of a perfect woman as a paradox—the paradox of virginity and motherhood. Some such ideal would seem to lie, perversely, at the bottom of sensual and terrible cults, corrupted almost past recognition in their development, but none the less traceable in their origins. In other cases the two strands of the paradox are divided, and we have the age-long and universal reverence for virginity surviving and flourishing in the midst of cults based on the worship of fertility and the processes of generation.

Mary is both Virgin and Mother. Therefore she is perfect and complete. Virginity alone lacks something—Motherhood alone has lost something. In Mary alone there is neither loss nor lack, so she is able to stand at the meeting-place of two worlds. Behind her lies the old Covenant that made her—the age-long processes of nature, the agonies of the earth-mother, the gropings and dreams of the mind of man, and finally, as the stream narrows, the austere ways of Israel—the "ethical Monotheism" which was to mould her conduct and belief so as to fit her for the guidance of the Holy and True—the endless complication, the sanctified hygiene of the Mosaic law, preparing a noble body for her who was to give a body to her Maker. Is it fanciful to believe that the Mosaic law—all that long elaboration of washings and cleansings and self-denials, of regulated food and regulated marriage—had no other object

than to prepare a fit physical vehicle for Incarnate God? . . . "a body hast thou prepared me."

Before her lies the new covenant of grace—the assumption of nature into supernature, the taking up of the manhood into God. The old testament has done its work, but it can do no more—there must be a change, a new process must be set working in the world—and once more there is a miraculous birth—of Mary—Mare. There she stands, at the meeting-place of the worlds, both virgin and mother—purity without sterility, experience without corruption. Herself both Spring and Summer she is the heart and essence of Eternal May.

June

Month of the Sacred Heart

THE trees are all covered now—they are thick with their summer leafage. The outline of the hedge is blurred, and the hedge trees no longer stand out spindled against the sky, but have become rich shapes of green. The meadow trees cast wide shadows, in which the cattle sleep, and the waters of the stream are dark with the reflected grey-green of the willows. But the thickest shades are in the woods. The interlacing boughs of the oaks, the denseness of the undergrowth of chestnut and hazel, have woven a tent above a hidden place of secrets and shadows. The woods have a secret heart—dense, green and living; the sunlight filters only in stray drops down into the spurge, while the moss round the trunks of the trees is still damp, though outside in the meadow the sun has long ago drunk up the dew. There is a refuge in the secret places, in the secret heart, of the woods—away from the dust that whirls in the baking lane and has parched the hedgerow, from the sun that glares down on the grass and up from the ponds, from the activity of the fields where the haymakers are at their work. The

woods know neither dust nor heat nor toil, and keep their secret places cool and green.

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"He came, a man, to a deep heart, even to a secret heart, hiding his Godhead from human view . . . " So St. Augustine the Bishop quotes the Vulgate in the Lesson from his works which is read at the Office of Tenebrae for Holy Saturday. "He came"—God came, even the eternal Word and Son —"a man"—in our complete human nature, in our flesh—"to a deep heart"—even to the participation of our human emotions, our joys, our sorrows, our fears, our indignations, which have their symbol in the human heart.

It is possible that many people who call themselves orthodox have little conception of our Lord's humanity beyond the flesh. They believe indeed that he lived, suffered and died in a human body, but limit their conception of a body to flesh, bone and muscle. They ignore the fact that all psychological processes are also bodily, and imagine, somehow, that our Lord's psychological processes appertained purely to his Godhead and were distinct in some mysterious fashion from the human nature he assumed. Thus we have our modern Docetists, who reduce the Incarnation to an appearance only, since the body is no more than an appearance, without the human mind which moves it. Our Lord assumed the entire man—the inward man of the emotions as well as the outward man of the flesh.

The Eternal, we are told in the theological definition, has attributes but no passions. It is not true to speak of the Most High God as feeling anger or grief or pleasure. Nevertheless by virtue of his condescension we can speak so of the Incarnate Son. For the Christ who humbled himself to our flesh humbled himself also to our emotions. Therefore we are told of him that "he was wroth," that "he was moved to compassion," that "he rejoiced in spirit," that "he was in agony." All these emotional conditions were a limiting of the Divine Nature, just as was the assuming of the mechanism of the human body. They were part of the lowliness to which the Son of God stooped when he made himself of no reputation.

Here we have one of the great contrasts between good and evil. God limits himself in his creation. He limits himself by the laws of the visible universe, just as the Word was limited by the human nature he assumed. God is continually bowing and humbling himself towards us. The Evil One, on the other hand, exalts himself by means of the material Universe. He has no power except it be given him. We can picture him as keeping himself in power and life through the created universe—drawing his life and strength and activity from that which draws its life and strength and activity from God. . . . Evil moves and grows in the emotional heart of man, entering by means of his primitive inheritance—the instincts on which his character is built, and which

have become channels of evil instead of good owing to the first bad consent of his will. It flows into and corrupts the emotions into which these instincts grow, so that it can be said of the heart of man that it is "desperately wicked."

But the New Life offers redemption to the human heart—offers us a New Heart with the rest of the New Creation, offers us, in fact, his own Heart as a substitute for ours. "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh"—even his own Sacred Heart, the human nature of will and emotion which he took of Mary. By that tender stooping of the Infinite to our human joys and sorrows, all our psychological processes are redeemed —poor distressed Psyche too enters the kingdom of God.

"He came a man to a deep heart, even to a human heart, hiding his Godhead from human view."

But April and Easter have already told us that he did not merely stoop to our humanity—he stooped to raise it. He became one with us "not by the conversion of the Manhood into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God." When he ascended into the heavens, into all the gold and glory of the eternal summer sun, he ascended in our human nature, in our complete nature of emotion and will as well as in our flesh. Our human nature lives in the heaven of heavens, perfect, redeemed—but human in a sense to which our imperfect humanity has never

yet attained. Only perfect God could become perfect man.

"On the highest throne of the heavens I beheld a man sitting . . ." He is there, with all our sorrows and our joys, our fears, our indignations. His sympathy for us is not one merely of divine understanding but of divine experience—not in some distant point of history, but now, eternally—since upon the throne of God dwells all the longing, desire, striving, love and anguish of mankind, the human heart which he has redeemed and made his Sacred Heart.

"O, Sacred Heart, our home lies deep in thee" . . . all the pain, the fear, the grief, the rapture, the wonder of my human heart, all those emotional stresses that I only half understand and which sometimes threaten to engulf me, all these I can bring home to that Deep Heart, to that Sacred Heart, since for my sake, O passionless Word, you stooped to know the shadows of human emotion, to know joy and sorrow, wrath and compassion, and, stooping, raised them with yourself to your high throne.

July

Month of the Precious Blood

JULY comes as the climax of the year, when the months have reached their solstice with the sun. The earth's conversion is complete—she is born anew in the woods where the trees are heavy and dark with their full summer leafage, in the hedgerow where the honeysuckle hangs thick trails over the already thick briar-rose, in the fields where the hay is cut, and where the corn stands sunburnt and nearly ready for harvest.

Along the side of the Down the poppies grow in a scarlet streak—like blood. They splash the growing corn, and they flower too in the chalky aridity of the quarry outside the field. They are the brave pennons of July—gay and blood-red, the colour of life pulsing and triumphant, the colour of the field's salvation and the earth's victory.

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James Weller "got salvation," and in the year 1842 was published at Robertsbridge in Sussex, a little book called "The Wonders of Free Grace." It is the story of Weller's short life—packed into many halting, ungrammatical sentences, between dull brown covers, the colour of the lanes he trod. Yet if things

were to appear in their hidden reality that book would be seen printed and bound in poppy scarlet, for it is written in blood—the heart's blood of the "little man of Kent" and the Precious Blood which redeemed that heart and made it new.

"I was born in sin." There is something Pauline in the opening phrase, which, however, means no more than that his parents were "very ignorant of the power of godliness." They were poor simple people, the father a farm labourer earning a lean, uncertain living on the farms round Headcorn.

Little James was a puny child, terrified with dreams. A frail constitution and a hard life worked an excitable mind to the edge of religious mania, though in those days he had learned none of the jargon of damnation which Calvinism was to teach him later—he was a child of the Church, which provided for his physical as well as for his spiritual needs, since his family seem to have "come on the Parish" at a very early date.

When his father died they were left quite destitute, and the rigorous old Poor Law "put out" the wretched James to work on various farms. The spiritual history of those years reads like the blacker parts of "Grace Abounding"—he was convinced that he had committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost. Many times he felt urged to take his own life, and he seems to have been unable to pass a pond or brook or well without contemplating in it release from the existence which was fast becoming un-

bearable. But he lived on, alternating frightful impulses towards suicide and dreams of a devouring hell, with hopes of release, of discovery and union—sometimes coming to him through the ministrations of the various sects in which he sought relief, sometimes in the pages (opened with ritual casualness) of that Book which, however, often scattered its comfort with trumpet-blasts of judgment.

Very different from the straining carefulness of his spiritual life was the extremely haphazard way in which he managed his worldly affairs. He drifted from farm to farm with his inefficient labour—many a hearty Kentish kick and curse must have followed him as he roamed head-in-air, soul-in-hell, through the tasks of his day. He was always ill, always poor, and yet at the age of twenty-one he married in Frittenden church a girl as penniless as himself. Then a painful internal complaint began to afflict him. He grew unable for all but the lightest farm work, and soon became so ill that he had to go into the infirmary at Maidstone. Here he fell under the influence of a pious Baptist lady, who visited him on behalf of the "Benefit Society for the Sick," and to her he owed his deliverance from his "legal struggles," since she taught him the doctrines of Election and of Uncovenanted Grace. But there was a bad time to be lived through first. His agonies of soul increased, the *sortes biblicæ* yielded only blasts of damnation, and then the day came when "I clearly saw the justice of God in my eternal overthrow, and actually bade

adieu to the world with an Amen to my own destruction." Immediately upon this surrender followed Illumination—"a sweet glowing, a brilliant light like the shining of silver. I sprang up and sang and wept and cried aloud for joy."

Directly after his conversion came Weller's brief sweet experience of the Joyful Mysteries. There is a touching account of his first happy moments in the midst of poverty and sickness, and the cares of his young increasing family which would not even allow privacy for his devotional raptures.—"Having no place to retire to, I have wrapped myself in the curtains of my bed, and in silent breathings poured out my soul to God in the sweetest strains possible."

But trouble was never far from a nature combining the philosophy of Micawber as to the affairs of this world with that of Mrs. Gummidge as to the next. All through life his happiness was to be threatened by the presiding evils of both states—Debt and Damnation. He tried various means of livelihood, combining them with a new-found vocation as a preacher. A little school, a baker's shop, severally failed, and for some time he tried to support himself by a peddling sale of books and tea. Luckily he was gifted with an ingenuous humility which allowed him thankfully to accept any gift, whether of money, food or clothing, no matter how grudgingly it was bestowed—grateful to the Lord who had provided for him as for Elijah out of the hard, unsympathetic beaks of ravens.

He received also small sums of money for his preaching, which had a certain favour among the 'dens' of Kent. It had begun merely by an account of his conversion to a few sympathisers at Maidstone, but later he had learned, like most converts, to make a universal application of his private experiences, and laid huge stress on the doctrines of Predestination and Election and Free Grace. While still at Maidstone he had joined the Baptists, but the Baptists at Maidstone were Arminians, whereas his nature and the circumstances of his conversion inclined him towards Calvinism. He thought of joining the Calvinists, who had small congregations at Smarden and other hamlets. But "my pen cannot describe the exercises of my mind on the thought of leaving the Arminian Baptists. It would make many of my former friends my foes." Far away at Oxford a similar conflict was at about the same time raging in the breast of Newman, and this mute inglorious Newman was to follow the same course as his famous contemporary. He seceded, and became a Particular Baptist.

The next few years are a history of struggle, contempt, debt, care, family trials, dependence on the charity of the Elect, whose very cast-off clothing he and his children wore. But the greatest experience of his regenerate life was at hand—the Word which was to send him out of his native and familiar Kent into unknown Sussex, carrying his Gospel to the Gentiles. The call came to him as it had come to the Apostle Paul from the Man of Macedonia—"Come

over and help us." The Man of Sussex was a "miller in Ticehurst, a perfect stranger to me," whom he met on the Headcorn Road. "He had passed but a few rods, when these words were powerfully impressed upon my mind—'that man comes out of Sussex to invite you to go down there to preach.' At which I immediately said 'Dear Lord, I am not fit to go into Sussex.' " However, he dared not refuse so imperative a summons, enforced through the continual impression on his mind of the words "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." To the Gentiles he went, the barbarians of Shovers Green, from whom soon afterwards came a definite call. He went in the greatest agony of mind, full of doubts and fears and distresses, but in spite of this his preaching was found acceptable to the little knot of believers at the cross-roads beyond Bantony. Here he continued going once a fortnight for some time, though in due course opposition arose—he was accused of being "an Antinomian, a Huntingtonian, a High Calvinist, a Beemanite," and a large party withdrew from the chapel, though as others came from surrounding parishes, he still had a good congregation. However, in time the disaffected party got the upper hand, and there seems to have been a sort of riot—"an unusual concourse of people in the public road, with loud hollowings and shouts of Horrible! 'Bominable! Stuff!" In the end, Weller's career as an apostle of the Gentiles came to rather a tame conclusion in his being dismissed by the Deacon, who paid him his

salary and told him that his services would be no further required.

However, his work was only apparently ended. Soon afterwards he received a call to Mayfield, with occasional returns to Frittenden and Smarden, and finally he detached himself altogether from Kent and became a regular preacher at Burwash, whither followed him the loyal part of his congregation at Shovers Green. The story of his life at Burwash is his usual mixture of good works and bad debts; however, his circumstances both spiritual and material, seem to have grown more stable. His ministry was becoming famous among the farms, and in 1842 a friend at Robertsbridge offered to "give me a house to turn into a chapel, with a lease of fifty years and ten pounds per annum towards the support of the cause. This gave me fresh reasons for prayer." The offer was accepted, and the foundation stone was laid in November 1842, the opening taking place in January of the next year. Preachers came respectively from London and the Upper Dicker, and "were much favoured in their own souls; but as for myself, I was sorely tried the whole of the day with my own debts and those of the chapel."

So ends the story of the "Wonders of Free Grace." Weller did not long enjoy his more established existence, for he died five years after coming to Robertsbridge. But his Bethel and his book remain, both akin in their ugliness and humility. One reads the book with much the same feelings as one looks at

the Bethel. It is written entirely without art—a wordy stammering narrative, mixed with minute reports of dreams, spiritual experiences, marvellous conversions, digests of sermons and Calvinistic arguments. It is all obscure, voluble, earnest and naive.

A remarkable and poignant thing is his utter blindness to the beauty spread round him in the fields of Sussex and Kent. He seems to have tramped the Kentish lanes, gone to and fro among the red villages of the Sussex weald, crossed the still, sweet valleys of the Rother and the Glotten Brook, without a thought for their loveliness. This exile in darkest Geneva was blind to all beauty save that which reached him in occasional, tortured flashes from the Thick Darkness where God was. The coloured, wooded country round Sissinghurst, the brooding, merging greens of the Rother Marshes, the farm-patched mound of the Isle of Oxney, the flushed hillock of ancient Rye had no voice for the messenger of Grace. Even the coming of Spring, to be to the earth what conversion is to the man, to do yearly for the Benenden meadows what Free Grace had done once for James Weller, brought no sympathetic thrill to the heart which saw only its own Particular mercies. As he groped and stumbled on his way, nature walked beside him through her mysteries, from the Spring Annunciation to the Falling Asleep of December.He might have had the comfort of her beauty, the fellowship of her experience, but he went aloof—the Protestant, the individualist,

his eyes cast down up the narrow lane of his salvation where his footsteps were marked in blood.

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To the Catholic Christian there is a special glamour about such stories as this of James Weller, of conversion and salvation outside the normal sphere of the Covenanted Mercies. They are like stories of men who win their way across uncharted seas in unseaworthy craft—of men who miss their way up a mountain, yet, somehow, arrive at the summit, bleeding and exhausted, by another path. So powerful is the Precious Blood that it can work its changes on mankind apart from the means appointed for its operation. Unlike the old life, the New Life is not bound by its own laws, and again and again it amazes us with miracles. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish . . ."

The normal channel of the Precious Blood as it flows from the Sacred Heart of Christ, making us all partakers of his divine humanity, is the sacramental system of his Church, which is his Body. But just as there can be contacts between mind and mind without the agency of the body—though such contacts must always be abnormal, uncertain and unsatisfactory—so there is contact between the New Life and human lives which as yet stand outside the body of its functioning. And as these telepathic unions between mind and mind have a special glamour about them which perhaps we do not find in ordinary human intercourse, so these uncovenanted

graces of the New Life give us a new thrill as of power unguessed and unrealised.

It is true that there is always something a little terrible about the experiences of the separated saints. They are not quite natural, and therefore not quite spiritual. Where the conversion is not too subjective to last, the New Life often has to grow in an atmosphere of fear—fear of sin and fear of hell, or fear even of the homely shapes of earth, which the separated Saint sees unredeemed, as vessels of wrath.

It is for our sins that the Precious Blood does not flow in the veins of Christ's Body only. As long ago on Calvary, it is still poured upon the ground. The spear of schism pierces his side, and thereout flows blood and water—the sacraments poured out in death. It is through our guilt that men such as James Weller obtain their Particular Mercies. We have pierced his heart, and it is because his heart is broken that there is grace not only for us but for all the children of God that are scattered abroad.

August

Month of the Most Pure Heart of Mary

THE sun has set, but there is still colour in the sky and colour on the sea. Pale streaks of rose lie along the horizon, both on cloud and on water. The sea, where it meets the sky is a lightless pink, where it touches the land a lightless blue. It is strange, this lightless colour of the sea. Under all the riches of its summer twilight changes the sea seems lifeless. There is a deadness too in the sky now that the sun has gone. It is all like a painted memory of something once seen, a dream of something once alive. Then a wind goes over the waters, and suddenly a point of living light is kindled, as the first star shines out in the lifeless sky. The planet named long ago after the goddess of beauty is still the star of the sleeping August sea. It shines one tiny brilliant point of light in all that rose-blue lifelessness of sky and sea. Round it and beneath it clouds and water waken into darkness, so that by the time the other stars have kindled, and the moon has risen, the whole dead scene has come to life again in glowing depths of gold and blue.

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The human race flowered in Mary. Sown in the garden of man's universal dream, tended and

watered by the Law of the chosen race, the Rose of Sharon bloomed to be fertilised by Godhead. Mary stands alone as the single perfect flower brought forth by that sad sowing of the human race. Rich was the soil and many were the gardeners, yet only one blossom opened perfectly to the sun.

So once again the adventure of life could be made, the suitable medium having been found. The medium of the natural life that first came wonderfully to an inorganic world was the sea, in which organic life arose—Aphrodite, beautiful and fertile, born of the sea-foam. The medium of the supernatural life that came wonderfully into nature was the pure will of Mary when she proclaimed herself the handmaid of the Lord. Her name signifies saltness, bitterness, in fact, the salt and bitter sea—there is no flowering in her name—but her perfect will is the star of the sea, which makes a guiding path across its mystery—the star which yet is not a star, but a planet blazing with reflected glory.

Thus she is the rose to symbolise that she is the flower of all life, the flower of the long growth of the ages; she is also the sea to proclaim that she is the virgin source of the New Life, of the ages yet to come; she is the star of the sea to show the guidance of her perfect will, perfect only in its reflection of the glories of the will of God. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." When Mary speaks these words a new star is kindled, and the dead world comes alive in the night.

The sanctified myths of Genesis point to the failure of the purpose of life through the corruption of a woman. This need not involve the belief that the first perversion of free will came through woman as distinct from man. Eve symbolises the feminine principle in things—the receiver, the reflector, the material, the medium. Through the wrong choice of the first human wills, the medium of creation was spoiled, and the human race became in its tendencies a part of nature rather than of supernature. Intended for the spouse of heaven, it turned instead to Adam —Edom—red earth, and by turning earthwards away from heaven, to the knowledge of good and evil, it lost its purpose even in regard to the earth it turned to, its powers of redemption, its functions as mediator, and cursed became the ground for our sake.

Mary too stands as a symbol—the symbol of the restoration of the lost purpose of life through the sanctification of a woman. The medium, the receptacle is rehabilitated in Mary, "spiritual vessel, wondrous vessel of devotion," and becomes the vehicle of the divine. By the Holy Ghost, Mary is made the spouse of heaven and the mother of heaven's Lord.

The body which the Redeemer took of his Virgin Mother was not an inheritance of the flesh only, but the inheritance of a human heart and will. We all receive from our parents a heart and will made crooked by a perverted inheritance, in other words by sin. The heart and will of our Lord were clean

and straight and without sin. His psychological processes were as God intended them to be—an orderly development from primitive yet honourable instincts moving towards completeness, which is perfection. "The sin is in the will." There was no sin in the will of Mary, which was simply the will of God, so she was able to give her son what no other human parent has been able to give. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth proclaims that he took from her the feminine principle only—the vessel, the vehicle—while Godhead provided the masculine or quickening element. If he had been born according to nature he would have belonged to nature, but he was born the mediator of two worlds, the natural and the supernatural—"by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary." Once more the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters, and the New Creation is begun.

It was Mary's privilege to give our Lord all that he took of manhood. She gave him human nature at its best—the perfect vehicle. She gave him not only a human body but a human mind—and she did more than give. What she had already given she trained and guided. Again and again, psychologists tell us, even a good inheritance will be wasted by the mistakes of the parents during the first years of their child. The delicate child-mind may be hopelessly warped and spoiled by the mishandling of those that train it. The more we learn of the discoveries of modern psychology the more we are impressed by

the terrific responsibility of the Mother of God. To her care was committed not only her infant's tender body, but his beautiful, perfect, sensitive mind. Those early years which psychologists tell us make or mar a whole life were entirely in her keeping. It was for her to sow the seed of early impressions, to impart the first teaching. Only the glory of her own submitted will could have guided her through the ocean of her motherhood's cares—that will which was simply the perfect reflection of the will of God.

The spirit of God moves over the face of the waters, and the waters become a miraculous source of life. Above the waters a single star is bright with the reflected glory of the sun.

September

Month of the Sorrows of Mary

THERE is a new sharpness in the air—the first sharpness of Winter returning. There is a sharpness which is only just not the sharpness of frost on the dew that lies so late and thick upon the morning grass. The winds sleep, and the air is bound. But this sharpness and stillness are not as in frozen January, for they are no longer sterile—they are rich, fruitful, golden. Up into the still air ascends the straight blue smoke-column of the bonfires that consume the dross of summer, and in that burning there is a sweetness, a richness that makes the heart beat quickly and almost chokes the breath. There is no perfume like that of a September garden fire, burning away the summer in an agony of sweetness. The smoke of it goes up like incense through the gold and blue of the afternoon. The breath of the earth is like incense as she turns slowly to her sleep. The earth is emptied of her harvests, but not of their perfume—it hangs still about her, perfume of the crops she has brought forth, corn and hops and hay, merged into one rich sweetness in the September sunshine. She is stripped but she still is sweet, indeed sweeter in this autumn spoliation than ever in her sun-baked fertilities of Summer, just as the trees are lovelier in their golden

dying than in the pale austerity of their budding or in the green monotony of their July crown. The trees are still bearing fruit. The crimson of the apples hides among the golden green of the leaves. September is the month of the fruitful trees, of the harvest of the golden bough. The field has given up the last of her harvests, but the orchard is still heavy, and in the wild trees of the woods the acorns, the nuts, the sloes are ripe among the yellowing leaves.

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Two women stand at the foot of two trees. The women are weeping, the trees are heavy with fruit. Eve stands at the foot of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—Mary stands at the foot of the Cross. Both are Matres Dolorosæ—sorrowful mothers—Eve the mother of all living, Mary the mother of life. Eve has betrayed her children, through the perverse choice of her will, but weeps for herself rather than for them—Mary has been redeemed by her child through the offering of her will, and she weeps for him alone.

The sorrows of Mary are fertile sorrows—the ground watered by her tears is rich for all mankind, whereas the tears of Eve water only thorns and thistles, cockle and darnel. The sorrows of Mary are sweet as the perfume of the September fires, they go up as incense to heaven. The sorrows of Eve are bitter as the smoke of green wood, and the gusts of her self-love blow them along the ground.

It is not the first time that Eve and Mary have stood over against each other in the scheme of the ages. They are both the medium of creation, vessels of life, the material of the active, creative principle of the universe. But in Eve this material has failed, it thwarts the life that works in it, so that its energies are not only cramped but perverted. Eve fights against the power that uses her—hence her own suffering, and the apparent failure of the power, due to the defects of its instrument. For Eve has discovered herself, and uses her will for her own purposes, with the result that both her own purposes and the purposes of God as far as she is concerned are lost. She knows both good and evil, but can use neither. The serpent deceived her by biting his own tail and calling himself eternity, hence she is caught in the round of things and cannot escape.

Mary stands at the foot of the Cross as the second Eve. Once more the creative principle has sought a medium, and this time the medium has responded perfectly, so that the work of the new creation of the new heavens and the new earth, has not been foiled by its instrument. Mary used her freedom, her will, not for herself but to further the purposes of God. She became as it were the collaborator of God by yielding herself as his handmaiden. As a reward he has made her a sharer of his joys and sorrows. The sorrows of Mary are fertile because they are the sorrows of the Cross. Every one of them, from the flight into Egypt till the moment when she holds the

slain body of her son upon her knees, every one of them draws life from the fountain of the Precious Blood. The mother standing there weeps no vain tears of selfish grief nor vain regret—her sorrows are already united with the sacrifice of her Son, she offers them to God with his, for the purposes of redemption. Her sorrows are fruitful for the assistance of the world on its new ways, in company with all human sorrow which is offered at the foot of the Cross. They are part of the new processes of life—the sublimation of the old laws whereby nature groaned and travailed towards higher things; they are part of the supernatural evolution, in which sorrow is eucharistic, a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

The sorrows of Mary go up to heaven in perfume, like the fires of September. Her motherhood burns in an agony of sweetness. She is the rich earth, scented and fertile, at the foot of the golden bough, now ripe for harvest.

October

Month of the Holy Angels

THE sky is black. The great moonless arch sweeps from horizon to horizon, high over the zenith. It is black, and utterly unlit except for a golden shimmer, a dust of light, which is less light than radiance, as it were a bloom upon the grape of darkness. Here and there against this background of darkness and dim bloom, the nearer constellations swing their homely shapes—the chair, the horse, the plough; and high across the heavens is the span of that great road, track of the sun's chariot astray in mortal hands, the road of stars, where they lie like dust.

Looking up into the sky, into the blackness lit by radiant dust, we almost forget the earth under our feet. It shrinks in all this hugeness of space, and we ourselves shrink with it till we cry the age-long cry of those that watch the stars—"What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels . . ."

We see the earth as one of the smaller planets revolving round one of the smaller of the myriad suns that are as small dust in the small corner of the universe that is before our eyes. We see mankind as one of innumerable forms of life, some known, some

unknown. Important in his small sphere, what is he in the spaceless immensity of the stars? Where does he rank in the scale of being, with its hierarchies that tower above him into eternity? Is he only a little lower than the angels?

We cannot count the suns we see—we cannot imagine the counting of the suns we do not see. We cannot count the miles, nor the years of the sky. We can only gaze upon it as it hangs above us in this moment of time, and use for our homely ends the faint glimpses we have down here of its wonderful order. . . .

A red star suddenly cleaves the heavens. It appears to fly through them, though in reality it is far below them, burning because of its contact with the earth's atmosphere, and only for that reason visible. It streaks the sky with a fading crimson gleam—then sinks among the woods and is lost.

* * * *

"How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning,"

It is easier to drop the counting of years and go outside time. Created will exists, and has power of itself. In part it has made the evil choice, it has turned away from the Creative Will which is both its source and goal. It has become evil. It is at war with good. There is war in heaven. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon; and the dragon fights and his angels, but they prevail not, neither is their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan . . . he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him . . . Woe to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Evil, in itself, must die, since life subsists alone in God. Therefore every existence cut off from him must end. The dragon must perish apart from the Lord and Giver of life, his only hope is to establish an indirect and factitious union with his God in time. This he achieves through the material universe with which he is able to ally himself and which itself is sustained by God. He maintains his life through the elements—he becomes the Prince of the Power of the Air.

He enters the cycle of evolution, and we can follow his trail through natural law—in the cruelty and futility of nature, which we cannot believe formed part of her Creator's original design. As life develops, becomes more subtle, rich and various, we see the adversary's growth more explicitly revealed, till at last in animal consciousness, with its capacity for fury and pain, he attains a new power and satisfaction. The world is like a beautiful tree with a worm gnawing at its roots—twisting, stunting, and warping it, so that the fruit shrivels among the wilting leaves. Jömungund gnaws at the root of Yggdrasil.

But a new wonder happens upon the earth. To consciousness is added mind and will. Created will makes a new appearance—in time. Here is a great new opportunity, both for good and evil. If the adversary can obtain power over this new form of conscious will, he can prolong indefinitely his own life and activity—perhaps even obtain once more a holding in eternal things, by means of this new creature which has been made in the image of God. On the other hand, man may by a right use of his free will redeem the world, save nature from her curse of cruelty and futility, and set her free to return to the kingdom of God. Then the evil one and his angels would fail and perish—they would be cast out of earth as before they were cast out of heaven, and be unable to maintain any longer through creation their illicit hold on life.

These were the issues, and the myths of many races tell us how mankind failed to rise to his high calling. Instead of devoting the sword of his free will to the service of good, and assuring thereby the overthrow of evil in time as it had been overthrown in eternity, man, thinking thereby to serve himself, turned it to the service of evil. Thus evil, defeated in eternity, became victorious in time. The adversary's power, till then bound by the limited consciousness of animal life, was enormously increased by its new hold on human mind and will. He was now the Prince of this World, its ruler and potentate, and would inevitably have destroyed it if

the Almighty King of Heaven had not decided that evil should not triumph even in time—that mankind's lost battle should be fought over again, and won.

By assuming our manhood, God fought our lost battle over again in his own person, and won it for us, redeeming not only ourselves but the kingdom of nature which we had betrayed. The serpent's head was bruised—he lost his kingdom. He has no more real power even in time—he is bound by time and must end in time. The Prince of this World is judged.

* * * *

This is only a dream of good and evil, of the mystery of their conflict. It is only a theory, a guess at the explanation of the apparently distorted processes of nature, and the slavery of mankind to the elements of the world. The eternal issues between good and evil have been fought outside time, by beings of a different nature from ourselves, in that symbolic heavenly war wherein Michael and his angels triumphed over the devil and his angels. In that conflict the victory is already won by the forces of good. Evil is already cast out of the eternal sphere, neither is its place found any more in heaven. There is no dualism in the Christian religion, no setting of Satan against God as Ahriman is set against Ormuzd in the Persian myth. For evil is definitely cast out and trampled under the foot of triumphant Godhead. It has only a secondary and

limited existence—in time; whereas good is primary, unlimited and eternal.

In time, the forces of good are in conflict with the forces of evil, though outside time their victory is won. Michael and his angels still have need to succour and defend us on earth, and their power lies in the fact that they also do continual service in heaven. Their power is not secondary and limited by time as is the power of their adversary and ours—it derives from an eternal source, it is the same power that overthrew the Dragon on the plains of heaven—the power of God.

The power of the dragon lies in the life he is able to absorb from creation—from ourselves—just as the meteor owes its light to its passing through our earth's atmosphere. In one of Dr. M. R. James's ghost stories there is a spectre which makes itself a body out of some bedclothes, but is unable to injure its victim, as its strength lies entirely in the medium it has chosen, which is merely a bundle of linen. So the harm that evil can do is merely a question of the body it acquires. It rests with us whether it embodies itself in our highest thoughts and strivings or can do no more than frighten us with a bogey made of our discarded primitive instincts. Its most common embodiment is in the elements of our human psychology which we inherit from our animal ancestors—the grave clothes that the risen man has cast aside.

In our fight against evil we fight against what is merely temporary, parasitic and doomed, and on our side are forces which are primary, self-existing and eternal. On our side are the unchanging stars in their order, and our adversary is only the meteor that streaks the sky for a moment of earth-derived brightness, falls and is lost.

November

Month of the Holy Souls

THERE is a great silence over all the land. The furrows hold in stillness the new seed—brown, bare, and earth-smelling, they keep the secret of the life that has been buried in them. There is darkness too. At night the galaxy has faded from the sky—here and there rarely some greater lamp shines through the mists that veil the zenith, but more often even the moon herself is hidden, fog-wrapped, a mere dim spilling of light into the clouds. By day too the mists hang thick. The earth lies motionless and silent under a veil. Trees and hedges near at hand are hidden away or only loom occasionally through the mists as monstrous, unnatural shapes. There is something terrifying about the familiar barns and haystacks that the mist has blotted into ghostliness. The dimness and the silence bring a sense of fear, as of a land changed. Yet it is only the exhalations of the earth that have given this sinister, mysterious cast to loved, familiar objects. A gleam of sunlight falls upon the mists, and for a moment they part and show us the waiting furrow, and the hedgerows pearled with moisture and bloomed with a soft, spring-like purple that reminds us of March's brave

passional livery of redemption. Though despoiled, and bound, the earth is not dead, and in her already a new harvest sleeps.

* * * *

"For thou, O Lord, changest, but takest not away the life of thy people . . ." They are changed, they have gone from us, the mists of earth hide them from us and give to their loved, familiar personalities a touch of the sinister, of ghostliness. If we would let her, the earth would make them ghosts. But as our prayers strive through the mists that veil not them but us, a gleam of sunlight falls, and for a moment we catch a glimpse of them in their passional livery of redemption, waiting there under the altar, the prisoners of hope. "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope."

They are changed. They no longer look into the same mirror as ourselves, the mirror of nature where supernature lies reflected as in a glass darkly. They do not yet see face to face, but theirs is no longer the mirror of the months, where together with divine things strange troubling things of earth are shown, where often Narcissus sees but his own image calling him down into the well of shadows. Their mirror, though a reflector only, is unclouded and cannot deceive. They have escaped out of the deceiver's power, and can no longer be touched by the evil that preys on the world. They have left that evil behind in space and time, by virtue of him who

for their sake assumed space and time that he might bind with them the enemy of eternity.

They are changed. They have entered as it were into a new function as mediators, for they are now a link between us and those unknown worlds whose complexity makes the unity of creation. We cannot limit our conception of life to beings like ourselves. If they live, and we know that they live, they do not live as we do, but manifest themselves in other ways and under other conditions. Spirit and manifestation —the first is always the same, the latter is constantly changing. But spirit shall never be without manifestation—that truth was proclaimed for all time in Joseph of Arimathea's garden, and is preserved for all time in the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body. We shall not live as the helpless and futile shades of a Greek paradise, but as body and spirit, though that idea of a body need not bind us to the body as we know it now. The body of the springing corn in May is very different from the body of the seed that was cast into the November furrow, but it is as much the corn as ever was the seed—indeed it is more, for in the seed the idea of the corn slept undeveloped, uncertain and incomplete. Nevertheless the body of the springing corn was formed invisibly in the seed, and invisibly in the bodies of our flesh that spiritual body of our glory may be forming itself even now, waiting for the sowing in the ground which shall set it free to grow and lift

itself out of the bondage of the earth into the liberty of the sun.

They are changed. They are learning perhaps painfully to develop this new body, from which the husk has fallen away. As yet they have not the new vehicle, though they have lost the old, their spirit fumbles for its manifestation in that Mediatory Kingdom where they wait. They are prisoners, but they are prisoners of hope, for their new faculties and powers are forming themselves in that unknown land. Once again, as it were, they go through the processes of birth, as at the beginning of their earthly life they went through them in their mother's womb. A new body is forming itself in the shelter of that land we call Purgatory, where evil cannot seize upon the growing form as it seized upon that which was cast off. For those who escape the bondage of the earth, the Old Testament fierceness of natural law, the continual harrying and preying of evil seeking to maintain its life parasitically through ours, Purgatory even if viewed as a place of retribution as well as of cleansing must also be a place of refreshing, light and peace.

For there only good wills move in an orderly growth, an evolution which sin has not corrupted and debased. There the mists of earth can no longer hide from us the stars which are the burning of spirits aflame with the love of God, the angelic hierarchies that fill a universe in which our earth and its humanity holds only a small space. The

shelter of the furrow is paradoxically the freedom of the sky. The prisoner of hope is the freeman of love.

December

Month of the Incarnation

THE earth has gone back to the beginning. Her secrets are locked up. The year's tale is told. She lies at the end of the months as she lay at the beginning—still and frozen, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of frost and snow. The beginning and the ending are the same.

There seems to be neither growth nor change nor life in the iron-hard soil, powdered here and there with snow, in the bare hedges and the barren woods, in the ponds that are black under their bondage of ice. Even the sun in the heavens stands still at his winter solstice. The glory and bravery of summer are almost unimaginable—it is hard to remember the changes of the months—the kindling gleam of February, the brightness of the April garden, the whiteness of the May-day hedgerow, the calm, star-lit seas of August, the fruitful golden trees of September. All have ended as they began in this darkness and stillness. The year's tale is told, and the beginning and the ending are the same.

* * * *

The months end as they began—with the Child. In December we meet the Child again, the Child of January, the Child who is Alpha and Omega, the

beginning and the ending, saith the Lord. In this Child the Christian faith begins and ends. All the doctrines of Councils, all the learning of doctors, all the disputations of scholars, all the splendour of creeds, have their beginning and ending in the Child born of the Virgin Mary. The Christian Gospel is simply the Gospel of the Incarnation—of the New Life born of a Virgin into the world, redeeming man from his bondage to the Law which was added because of transgressions—making him a citizen of a new and heavenly kingdom and a partaker of a new and heavenly nature—redeeming through him the rest of creation, of which he was first appointed a mediator, so that there shall be in eternity not only a new heaven but a new earth—an earth set free from the bondage of sin that held her in time, her processes redeemed for mercy, her creatures redeemed for joy.

It is this and nothing less than this that the New Life comes to accomplish—the first life having been corrupted by the enemy, and mankind having failed to fulfil his appointed purpose of restorer and healer. By virtue of the Incarnation of the Son of God, there is now a new power working in the world towards its at-onement with its maker. The Divine Humanity of our Lord, both superseding and containing ours, has already fulfilled the purposes of God for us, and through it we have union with God and are accounted his obedient sons, with power to co-operate in his eternal work.

The New Life works through the old. It uses matter in the way it was originally intended—as the vehicle and manifestation of spirit. Through Christ even the earth knows the glory of the Resurrection of her body. As long ago water gave birth to life, so now water is made the vehicle of the new birth and supernatural life—"Therefore do I hallow thee, O thou gift of water," says the Priest at the Blessing of the Font on Holy Saturday, "by God the faithful, by God the holy, by God who in the beginning by his word divided the land from thee, by whose Spirit the waters were overshadowed." As bread and wine have been the bodily food of man, giving strength and joy to his flesh, preserving his body in life, so now they are made his spiritual food, giving strength and joy to his soul, preserving his body and soul unto everlasting life. By natural modes they have been assimilated by man's body and made a part of his humanity, and now by spiritual modes they are assimilated by God and made a part of his divine humanity. "Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee, and grant that we receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution . . . may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood."

The Sacraments go down to the very roots of creation—they go further down than our humanity, though our humanity is the means by which they descend, thus restoring it to its original mediatory

purpose. Water, bread and wine—the elements and our own uses of the elements, inorganic and organic nature—are made the vehicles of supernatural life. Thus we are brought into a wonderful and mystical union between the earth and ourselves and the divine. Instead of remaining a creation at issue and enmity with itself and separated from God, we become a creation working together in mutual love and co-operation in union with God. Thus is the atonement wrought between God and man and the earth.

For our redemption is not only nearer but wider than we believed, and includes not only humanity but the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together. . . . It is not only in poetry but in truth that the Priest bids nature join in his thanksgiving after every Mass. "Let us sing the song of the Three Children which they sang when they blessed the Lord in the furnace of fire." And the Song of the Three Holy Children, redeemed from the furnace, is also the song of earth redeemed: "O let the earth bless the Lord, yea let it praise him and magnify him for ever. . . . O ye mountains and hills bless ye the Lord. . . . O all ye green things upon the earth bless ye the Lord. . . . O ye wells bless ye the Lord. . . . O ye seas and floods. . . . O all ye fowls of the air. . . . O all ye beasts and cattle—join to-day with the angels and with the priests of the Lord, with the servants of his sanctuary and the spirits and souls of the righteous, with all holy and humble men of heart, in singing the song

of our redemption which we sing in the midſt of the furnace of fire, praising and magnifying him for ever."

"The angel of the Lord came down into the oven and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; and made the midſt of the furnace as it had been a moiſt whiſtling wind. Then the three, as out of one mouth praised, glorified and blessed God in the furnace, saying: Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and to be praised and exalted above all for ever."

The heart of the burning fiery furnace has become Joseph of Arimathea's garden—the garden of the new earth and of the new spring, the blessed country where all the works of the Lord praise the Lord, the home of the children of men, of the holy souls and of the angels, where the risen Chriſt ſtands between the sun and moon, and greets the Church of his new creation with "Peace be unto you."

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